

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the EIR

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) to provide the public and responsible and trustee agencies information about the potential adverse effects on the local and regional environment associated with construction and operation of the Perris Dam Remediation Program (proposed project). This Draft EIR has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (as amended), codified at California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et. seq., and the *CEQA Guidelines* in the Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3.

This Draft EIR describes the environmental impacts of the proposed project and suggests mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. The impact analyses are based on a variety of sources, including agency consultation, technical studies and field surveys. DWR will use this EIR to consider implementation of the proposed project. As Lead Agency, DWR may use this EIR to approve the proposed project, make Findings regarding identified impacts, and if necessary, adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations regarding these impacts.

1.2 CEQA EIR Process

1.2.1 Notice of Preparation

In accordance with Sections 15063 and 15082 of *CEQA Guidelines*, DWR, as Lead Agency, prepared and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see **Appendix A**) on June 1, 2007. The NOP was mailed to approximately 77 interested parties, including local, state, and federal agencies; news publications; and other groups or individuals who had previously expressed interest in the project. A Notice of Completion (NOC) was also prepared by DWR and sent to the State Clearinghouse. Copies of the NOP were made available for public review at the Riverside County Library, Perris Branch, and the DWR web site: www.water.ca.gov.

The NOP provided a general description of the facilities associated with the Perris Dam Remediation Program, a summary of the probable environmental effects of the project to be addressed in the EIR, and maps showing the project location and a cross section of the Dam. The NOP provided the public and interested public agencies with the opportunity to review the proposed project and to provide comments or concerns on the scope and content of the

environmental review document including: the range of actions; alternatives; mitigation measures, and significant effects to be analyzed in depth in the EIR.

The 30-day project scoping period, which began with the distribution of the NOP, remained open through July 2, 2007. On June 20, 2007, a letter was sent to DWR from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) requesting a 90-day extension for the NOP commenting period. On July 2, 2007, the extension was granted by DWR to the date of September 28, 2007.

1.2.2 Public Scoping Meeting

DWR held a public scoping meeting on June 20, 2007 at the Perris Fairgrounds in Harrison Hall. DWR placed display ads prior to the scoping meeting in the Press Enterprise on June 6, 7, and 8, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to present the proposed project to the public through use of display maps, route alignments and handouts describing project components and potential environmental impacts. DWR staff, local water agency staff, and members of the public attended the scoping meeting. Attendees were provided an opportunity to voice comments or concerns regarding potential effects of the proposed project.

The Scope of the Draft EIR was determined based on the responses to the NOP and the issues raised at the public scoping meeting. Issues not related to environmental effects, such as financing, are not addressed in the Draft EIR but may be considered by the DWR Director before making a final decision on the proposed project. Please refer to **Appendix A** for written comments received during the Scoping Meeting and information related to the circulation of the NOP. These issues were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR.

1.2.3 Draft EIR

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. The report contains a description of the proposed project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives. The Draft EIR addresses the potential environmental effects of implementing the proposed project.

Significance criteria have been developed for each environmental resource analyzed in this Draft EIR, and are defined at the beginning of each impact analysis section. Impacts are categorized as follows:

- Significant and unavoidable;
- Potentially significant, but can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level;
- Less than significant (mitigation is not required under CEQA, but may be recommended);
- No impact; or
- Beneficial.

CEQA requires that a lead agency shall neither approve nor carry out a project as proposed unless the significant environmental effects have been reduced to an acceptable level, where possible (*CEQA Guidelines* §15091 and §15092). An acceptable level is defined as eliminating, avoiding, or substantially lessening the significant effects. If such a reduction is not possible, a lead agency

must adopt Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations. As defined in *CEQA Guidelines* §15093, a Statement of Overriding Considerations balances the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental consequences.

1.2.4 Organization of the Draft EIR

This Draft EIR has been organized into the following sections:

- S. Summary.** This chapter summarizes the contents of the Draft EIR.
- 1. Introduction.** This section discusses the CEQA process and the purpose of the EIR.
- 2. Project Description.** This section provides an overview of the proposed project, describes the need for and objectives of the proposed project, and provides detail on the characteristics of the proposed project.
- 3. Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures.** This chapter describes the environmental setting and identifies impacts of the proposed project for each of the following environmental resource areas: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils, Faulting, and Seismicity; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology, Water Quality, and Groundwater; Land Use and Planning; Noise; Public Safety/Flooding; Public Services and Utilities; Recreation; and Traffic and Circulation. Measures to mitigate the impacts of the proposed project are presented for each resource area.
- 4. Cumulative Impacts.** This chapter describes the potential impacts of the proposed project when considered together with other related projects in the project area.
- 5. Growth Inducement.** This chapter describes the potential for the proposed project to induce growth.
- 6. Analysis of Alternatives.** This chapter presents an overview of the alternatives development process and describes the alternatives to the proposed project that were considered.
- 7. Report Preparers.** This chapter identifies authors and consultants involved in preparing this Draft EIR, including persons and organizations consulted.
- 8. Acronyms.**
- 9. References.**

1.2.5 Public Review

This document is being circulated to local, state and federal agencies, and to interested organizations and individuals who may wish to review and comment on the Draft EIR. Publication of this Draft EIR marks the beginning of a 45-day public review period, during which written comments may be directed to the address below. During the 45-day review period, DWR will hold a formal public hearing on the Draft EIR. The public hearing will be

held February 3, 2010 at 6pm in Harrison Hall at the Lake Perris Fairgrounds, 18700 Lake Perris Drive, Perris, CA 92571.

Comments on the Draft EIR should be sent or e-mailed to:

Tom Barnes
on behalf of the California Department of Water Resources
707 Wilshire Boulevard, Ste. 1450
Los Angeles, CA 90017
tbarnes@esassoc.com

1.2.6 Final Environmental Impact Report Publication

Written and oral comments received in response to the Draft EIR will be addressed in a Response to Comments document which, together with the Draft EIR, will constitute the Final EIR. DWR will then consider EIR certification (*CEQA Guidelines* §15090). Once the EIR has been certified, DWR may proceed to consider project approval. Prior to approving the project, DWR must make written findings with respect to each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR in accordance with Section 15091 of *CEQA Guidelines*.

CEQA requires that the lead agency neither approve nor implement a project unless the project's significant environmental effects have been reduced to a less-than-significant level, essentially "eliminating, avoiding, or substantially lessening" the expected impacts. If the lead agency approves the project despite residual significant impacts that cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant level, the agency must state the reasons for its action in writing. This Statement of Overriding Considerations must be included in the record of the project approval.

1.2.7 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

State law requires lead agencies to adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for those changes to the project that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The *CEQA Guidelines* do not require that the specific reporting or monitoring program be included in the EIR. Throughout this EIR, however, proposed mitigation measures have been clearly identified and presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring program. All adopted measures will be included in a mitigation monitoring and reporting program to verify compliance.